

States and welfare recipients. Full check sanction, marriage promotion, and other enhancements will only make welfare reform more effective.

We realize that some have come to oppose this legislation, some that had been listed on the other side of the aisle. But, in our view, we are going to stand fast to see this reform through.

Some opponents of welfare reform clearly are trying to run out the clock on this reauthorization so they can turn back the clock to the days of dependence. We will resist their efforts. These opponents of effective social policy have essentially filibustered our efforts to fight poverty and support economic independence for America's poor.

I am, Mr. Speaker, very encouraged by the Senate Committee on Finance's recent approval of TANF reauthorization, and I now implore the Senate to work toward final passage of this crucial legislation.

We have an opportunity to write a final chapter on welfare reform, the most successful social reform of the latter part of the 20th century. And much of the credit I want to give today goes to the gentleman sitting in the Chair, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW).

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 7 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), the person who is the author of provisions that would enforce a real work requirement on our States by rewarding those States who find real jobs for people who leave cash assistance.

(Mr. LEVIN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) for all of his work.

Like the gentleman from Maryland, I favor this extension. The good news is that it is not a step backward. We are going to continue State flexibility, we are going to continue the focus on work. We are going to continue provisions for child care and health care and transportation, but I want to take this opportunity, as Mr. CARDIN did, to put this into perspective. I am glad the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH) is still here.

We worked hard in 1995 and 1996 on welfare reform. It was not a partisan effort. It was an effort with a Democratic President and with substantial work from Democrats in the House and in the Senate. Significant changes were made from the bill originally vetoed by President Clinton. Adequate child care, adequate health care, those were placed into the bill before it became a law.

This time around what the Republican majority in the House decided to do was to proceed, as Mr. CARDIN has said, on a very partisan basis. There was no effort to sit down as was true in 1995 and 1996, eventually, to see if we could work out together Welfare Reform II.

So, on a very partisan vote, the first vote was 229 to 197, the bill was passed and was sent to the Senate. Sad it is to say that since that time, and it has been a year and a half ago, there has been zero effort by the majority in this House to sit down with a number of us who were involved in 1995 and 1996 and those who have been active since and try to work out a bill on a bipartisan basis.

We have urged that welfare reform be continued and really improved, improved by more adequate child care, improved by more adequate health care. The data is pretty clear that many people who are moving from welfare to work are losing their health care after a year. Welfare reform should be improved by maintaining State flexibility and also by helping those who move from welfare to work to work out of poverty and to work into a decent and adequate wage.

So why not sit down and talk about these improvements in welfare reform? Well, the Republican majority here has done on welfare reform what they have done on most important issues: Ram it through, thumb their nose at the minority, including those who very much want to work on an issue, and send it over to the Senate. And like other products here on a very partisan basis, it runs into trouble in the Senate.

And so what is said by the majority here? Oh, it is the Senate's fault, when it was really the failure of the Republican majority here to start welfare reform on a proper, appropriate, and effective track.

Mr. Speaker, the good news is that the extension for 6 months will keep the better part of the welfare reform programs: health care, day care, State flexibility, and the focus on work. The bad news is that we have lost the opportunity to improve, to build on welfare reform, to have a sharper focus on movement of those who leave work out of poverty. Instead, the focus in their bill is really those who stay on welfare being kept busy.

That is not the wise focus for welfare reform in 2003 as it was not in 2002, and I hope 2004 will see their reaching out a hand to talk these things over. If not, I am afraid we will be back here with another extension, and you will point to the Senate controlled by the same party as you are a Member of and will blast the Senate. But that is not very constructive. It is not very useful.

So do not talk about all the hearings you have held, all the witnesses you have heard. Talk about how many minutes you have spent sitting down with the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), who is our ranking member, and the rest of us on the subcommittee to see if we could work out a bill. Tell us how many minutes. The answer is zero.

I say this not really to castigate, but to urge that you give the process a chance. Welfare reform deserves an effort to build a bipartisan and better product. I deeply believe that. So I

urge that we vote for this extension, and I also urge that the extension be followed by a true effort at finding a good product for the next phase of welfare reform.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me just say in closing, with what the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) said, I concur. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation. Let me just underscore the point, though, in 1996 we got it right. We got it right because we listened to each other, and we listened to the needs, and we realized by doing that we could transform the old welfare system into a system that encourages people to get off of cash assistance and to be employed.

The bill that passed this body is a step backwards. My friend from Pennsylvania said we will not take a step backwards. The legislation that passed that body did that. It was one size fits all. In 1996 we said we would trust local governments, our States, to craft the programs necessary to meet their constituency. Now we are going back, according to what passed this body, to one size fits all from Washington. That is inconsistent with what we did in 1996, which was the right way to go.

Secondly, we said in 1996, let people who are on welfare, on cash assistance, get the education and job training they need in order to get permanent employment. The legislation that passed this body takes a step backwards on that, restricting the ability of the States to allow welfare recipients to get the necessary education and training that they need. In 1996 we said they cannot do this unless they provide child care to the States so they could provide help to take care of the children. That is what we said in 1996. And yet in the bill that passed this body, we did not recognize that. Instead, we put unfunded mandates on the States and did not provide the necessary resources for child care. So I would hope that we will use the next 6 months to correct this.

Let me just say in the backdrop, as we are debating this today, the poverty rates in this Nation are actually increasing among children. Our States, almost all have cut their child care money because of their budget problems. The needs for us to act now is greater than it was a year ago when we originally passed the bill in this body. So I would hope that we would look at the current situation. Our States are spending more of their TANF funds every year than they are receiving in the annual authorization. The needs are there.

Yes, let us step up to the plate like we did in 1996. Let us work together in a bipartisan way. Let us be committed to get families not just off of cash assistance, but out of poverty, and if we will sit down and talk together, I am sure in the next 6 months we can come up with a bill we all can be proud of that will be supported by our States. If not, I am afraid the gentleman from Michigan's (Mr. LEVIN) prediction will